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C o n t e n t s

	page
Contributors	2
Rabbi Nachman's Wife	by Ralph Manheim 3
Little John	by Herbert Westen 14
Sand	by Wanda Burnett 26
Napoleon's Hat Under Glass	by Manuel Komroff 39
Spring Evening	by James T. Farrell 43
The Difficult Man	by William Carlos Williams 55
Initiation	by George Albee 61
The Man Who Walked Against The Sky	by Whit Burnett 65
The Goldfinch in the Chicory	by Myra Marini 69
Bertha	by Bruce Brown 74
Announcement	80

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RABBI NACHMAN'S WIFE

by

Ralph Manheim

IN the year 5558 after the Creation, on the eve of the Passover, Rabbi Nachman said to the men who were with him at the synagogue that this same year would surely find him in Palestine. When his wife heard this, she sent her eldest daughter to ask the Rabbi if it was really his intention to go away and leave his wife and daughters without money and protection. Esther, his wife, was not concerned for herself — for what is a woman but the smallest and least precious jewel in her husband's crown, a stick in his fire, a word in his book, a nail in his edifice? — But their daughters were not yet married, and how should she take care of them or provide them with a dowry if their father went away? The community of Medvedivka gave Rabbi Nachman a ruble a week, but now, though a man could do nothing more holy than go to Palestine, they would give him nothing.

Rabbi Nachman said to his daughter: "You will go and stay with your husband's parents, your mother will find work as a cook, and as for your little sister, some charitable man will bring her up." The Rabbi's daughter was but twelve years old, and did not understand her father's holy purposes. She began to cry, and complained: "I don't want to go away from Mama and sister, I won't have anybody to play with any more." So Rabbi Nachman hit her on the knuckles with a ruler and sent her home to her mother.

The little girl came home crying. "Why can't we go to Palestine too?" she asked her mother. And Esther answered: "When you are older you will understand your father's ways. Your father has raised himself by meditation to a higher region than any other Rabbi since the great prophets."

"Mama, what is a region?"

"A region is a place where women and children can't go. But your father feels that even he is not complete before he has been in Palestine."

"Is Palestine a region?"

"No, but we can't go there, because we take up too much room. It's a long way, and when a woman travels her clothes fall off and she loses them. She might get sick on the way or have children. A woman has so many bundles she doesn't know what to do with them, and when she comes back home half her petticoats are missing. Besides, a woman is only a woman, even if she has been to Palestine a dozen times."

Rabbi Nachman's house was full of weeping and complaining. Even Esther complained, for she was concerned for her daughters. But in her heart she was glad, because now her husband would surely be the greatest man of his time, for "a peasant in the Holy Land is greater than a great sage in Exile, but when once a sage has set foot on the beach at Haifa, he is a thousand times greater than all the sages in Exile."

But Rabbi Nachman had no pity. He sold his house and all his belongings to provide himself with money for the voyage, and before leaving he disposed of his family as he had said.

In the month of Nissan he went from Medvedivka to Nikolayev where he found a ship bearing wheat which was about to set sail for Odessa and Stamboul. There was no cabin free, but Rabbi Nachman told the captain that he was willing to sleep on deck. "The voyage," he said, "which takes a man to Palestine, the land of the prophets and of the fathers of the Kabbala, must fill him with such ecstasy that he is immune to all external hardships." In the days of his youth he had felt near God on the stream near the village of Husatin. How much nearer to Him he would feel when afloat on the sea, blown by the winds which are the breath of God!

During the voyage when Rabbi Nachman saw the waves rolling high and the stars dancing about the mast, he rejoiced, for all God's creation was dancing for him to see. And why should the elements not dance as a holy man nears Palestine? When the boards creaked, and the captain and sailors cried out for fear and prayed to their various Gods, Rabbi Nachman only laughed. He knew that the waves were dancing for his sake and would not harm him.

When he arrived in Stamboul, he was gay as in the days of his youth. He practised all manner of humility, going barefoot, and wearing neither hat nor belt. He went about the market-place like a young man, dancing with the common people, and singing in the wine-shops. He drank the new wine, and sang out of the joy of his heart.

He made friends with men and women of all nations. The women loved him because of his fiery eyes and his prophet's beard. They loved him because he was gay and danced like a Russian when he was drunk. Whenever he began to have a bad conscience, he thought of David and Solomon and Rabbi Akiba. When he was not singing and dancing and drinking with his friends, he went about the city practising humility. He gave away money and clothing to the poor, for he had no further use for his shoes, coat or hat, nor for money either, outside of his fare to Palestine. In the Holy Land there would be people glad to support a man as learned as he. They would give him a room in which to meditate in the rainy season, and bread and wine. What more did he need for the Lord's work?

By the end of summer he arrived at Haifa, and from there he went to Tiberias. Here he felt his strength redoubled by the sun, by the great holiness of the place. He spent his time in study and meditation, and lived with God in God's home. Once a great kabbalist asked him concerning his moral

progress in the Holy Land. And he began to speak with such great fervor that the blood rushed to his head and sang in his ears, and he fainted.

After he had lived with God for a year, he returned to Russia. Palestine was his true home, he said, and all the work which he had done before going there was nothing. He even burned the books which he had written previous to his voyage. But a man who has lived in the centre of the universe, who has talked to God by way of His first and profoundest wonders, must he not show his people the new light which burns in him? A man does not live only to see and to learn, he must also teach and recount the wonders which he has seen.

Finally he came to Bratzlav where he founded his school and wrote his books. There he found Rabbi Nathan, his chief disciple who treasured every word that fell from his master's lips, who wrote down his words, and lived his whole life in the light of the great man. Rabbi Nachman worked and defended his thoughts against his adversaries. And when he was sad, he told stories, stories which hung like visions between heaven and earth. The people grew to love him, and told his stories among themselves, and wept when they heard them, for his words were like angels. Rabbi Nathan loved him most of all, and saw to it that no word of his master's was lost.

But Esther, his wife, went to Kiev where no one had ever heard of her illustrious husband, and became cook in the house of a wealthy merchant by the name of Karlin. She was glad that her husband had gone to Palestine, was proud to be the wife of so great a man. And it did not occur to her to wonder whether she would ever see him again. It was enough for her to be his wife.

She soon came to be part of the family in her new home. She told the children stories. She told them of Ephraim, son of Aaron, who was born at the bottom of a well, and who as

a child was tempted by Samuel; of the Rabbi who fled from worldly honours and married a baker's daughter; and of Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Chassidim. But she liked best of all to tell them about her husband. One evening Karlin came into the kitchen and saw the children sitting spell-bound at her feet. He heard her tell them about Rabbi Nachman's childhood: "And when he was six years old," she said, "he decided that it was a sin to eat. How could he think of God if he ate and drank like an animal? But what could he do about it? If he stopped eating he would die, and then he would not be able to think at all. So he ate his food without chewing it, and without tasting it either. But then he noticed that it felt good to have food in his stomach and be full, so from then on he only ate what he had to to keep him from dying. And when he had eaten, he hit himself with a stick, so as not to feel any pleasure."

Karlin asked Esther who this wonderful child was. And she answered: "It was my husband, and now he has gone to Palestine to make himself even more perfect than before." And when Karlin asked her, she told him more of the wonders of Rabbi Nachman's childhood. And after that she sat with the family in the evening in the dark, musty parlor. The children sat by her as she knitted, and when they asked her, she told them stories. But in the end they always wanted to hear about Rabbi Nachman, and she told them the same stories over and again. Her eyes shone as she spoke, and she remembered his great joy in life. She experienced his joy, the joy of his work, of his wanderings, of his perfection. They had been married since she was ten years old. Could she help feeling his life in all its details? She was unworthy of his wisdom, and surely it was too profound for a woman's understanding. But a woman can overhear this and that and put this and that together until

she appreciates her husband's greatness, even the greatness of those ideas which she cannot hope to understand.

"And when he was young," she told them, "he used to go out into the woods for days at a time. And this was not on account of poverty, because he had a room of his own. He went up to a cave which was at the top of a mountain and stayed there all alone for many days. Each time he went out he became more perfect, and each time he loved God more and all the things which God created. He told me once: 'There is not a field or a forest for miles around that I have not passed through many times. And I love each place with a different love, and all of them with the same love.' And when we were in Husatin, he used to take a little boat and go out in the flags. This was a great wonder, because the current was strong, and before that time he had never been in a boat. But nothing ever happened to him, and every time he came home he was more perfect than before."

When she had told her stories, Karlin would laugh and gently make fun of Esther: "You with your wonderful husband! Even if he does exist, when do you think he will ever come back to you?" And Esther answered: "I don't have to worry about that. He will do what he thinks best, and whatever he does it is enough for me just to be his wife." And when Esther had gone to bed, Karlin sighed and said to his wife: "To think of a goodlooking young woman and a good cook wasting herself on such a good-for-nothing husband!"

Little by little she got the reputation of a good, crazy woman. They spoke of her as "poor Esther," "poor, crazy Esther" and the like. But neither Karlin nor his wife ever made fun of her in earnest or let her see that they doubted her sanity. The only person who did was Peter, the Shabbes Goy, who came in on Saturdays to light the fires and do the work around

the house that a Jew could not do. He was a big, blonde peasant simple to the point of idiocy, with a broad stupid smile and a loving heart. When his work was done he sat in the kitchen with Esther, and she fed him soup. She took a liking to him from the beginning and used to say: "When you wash your face, you're a fine looking young man. So if you wash it, I know where I can find you some brandy." After that he washed his face, and the brandy warmed his heart. Little by little they told each other what they had to tell. He told her that he had had a sweetheart, but she had called him an idiot and left him. "But I'm not an idiot," he complained. "Only sometimes I like to sing and fight and break glasses, and sometimes I'm so sad I sit there all day and don't know what to say." Then he sat back and gulped down his brandy as if his heart would break. And Esther told him about her husband in Medvedivka. He pulled his chair nearer and nearer to her, and when she had done talking, he was ready to put his arm around her waist. He laughed scornfully and said: "Your husband goes running away to Palestine, wherever that is, and you're crazy enough to sit there telling me what a wonderful man he is. When even a poor simpleton like me can see that he doesn't exist in the first place, because they say he did wonders, and if there are any wonders it isn't Jews that do them, and besides there haven't been any since Alyosha swallowed the frying-pan fifteen years ago. And even if he did exist why should he leave his beautiful wife and go kiting around with the ladies?"

Peter came nearer and nearer, and finally he had his arm around Esther. He drank his brandy out, and when he thought of Esther's husband, he laughed out loud; but as he thought of the misery which he had inflicted on this poor woman, he hung his head. And when he remembered that the man did not exist at all, he did not know what to do, so he put his head

on Esther's lap and began to cry. She saw no harm in this, and patted his head until he began to sober up.

He sometimes came to see her in the evening, and whenever she spoke of her husband, he either laughed or cried, or carried on in some way, depending on what he had been drinking. One evening he threw his arms around her neck, and kissed her. This was very agreeable to Esther, so she made no objection. She thought of her husband all the time, but what did the illustrious Rabbi Nachman have to do with a poor simpleton of a Shabbes Goy? Yet Peter, not content to hold Esther in his arms, got down on his knees and begged her to go away with him. "I have no money and no brains," he said, "but I have a little house in the woods, and I can chop wood, and sweep chimneys and kill chickens. The rest of the time we'll just kiss each other."

But Esther answered: "You forget that I am married, and even if my husband never comes back, he is my husband every day of my life. But you are good looking when you wash your face, so you can pat me and kiss me when you like, and I'll give you cake and brandy and sit on your lap."

The years passed, and Esther grew to middle age. She coiled her braided hair with less pains, and it stuck out over her neck. Her bosom was not as sightly as before. But Peter kept on coming to pat her on Saturdays and sometimes in the evening. They no longer spoke of Rabbi Nachman, nor of anything else much. As they sat in the kitchen Esther thought her own thoughts of her husband and his greatness. Even in those days, she thought, he was a very great man; how much greater must he be now that he has been in Palestine, now that he has done God's work for so many years! And as she lost herself in the thought of so much greatness, Peter mused how happy they might have been in the woods. Once she asked

him: "Peter, how is it you never get sick of coming to see an old woman?" And he answered: "Everything is different now, but your eyes are just as gay as when you came, and you were hardly twenty-five then."

Esther no longer told stories. The children had grown up, and now they affectionately made fun of her. But from time to time something reminded her of Rabbi Nachman, and then she would say: "My husband used to do so and so," and she was gay and happy. Karlin, who was now retired and spent his time reclining on an old divan, stroking his beard and thinking of old times, asked her from time to time if she had any news of her husband. And she answered: "He is so far above me by this time that he cannot possibly know of my existence. How could I hear from him?" Karlin no longer made fun of her. He stroked his beard and said: "Yes, he must be very great now, very great."

One day a young man came to Karlin's house and asked for Esther, saying that he had come a long way and had important news for her. He looked as if he would do her no harm, so they let him into the kitchen.

When the stranger saw Esther, he asked: "Are you Esther, the beloved wife of Rabbi Nachman, his memory be blessed, who lived at Medvedivka?"

Esther repeated: "His memory be blessed," and burst out weeping. "How long has he been dead?" she sobbed. "How do you know?" And when he had quieted her and made her sit down, the man told her: "I am Rabbi Nathan, and I was his pupil, peace be upon him. He taught me his wisdom and his joy, and I treasured his words more than jewels and wrote them down. Before he died, he told me to find out where you lived, and to find you. He told me to bring you his greetings and thanks for having always been a good wife to him. And then

he died on the third day of the second week of Tishri and was buried in Ouman in the grave which he had chosen. Before he died he told me that he had reached the highest step in the stairway of perfection which a man can attain to while clothed in the flesh. And he said that he longed to leave his body, because it was not possible for him to remain for one hour on the same step. He was a man who advanced each day, and on each day he lived a new life. God has granted that the true Messiah will be one of his descendants. And it is not possible for me to say all his praises. Peace be upon him." Rabbi Nathan broke down and wept with Esther; they sat on opposite sides of the kitchen table, hung their heads and wept.

"Tell me about his life," said Esther. "How long did he stay in Palestine?"

And Rabbi Nathan told her of his master's return to Bratzlav, and of the great work which he had done there. "He wrote pamphlets which annihilated his enemies, and great philosophical works. He showed that good deeds were worth more than a pure soul, and that Lilith did not bear demons by the lost seed of pollutions. And yet he was not proud. He still went up into the mountains and lived alone in the woods, and everywhere he practised humility. Sometimes in the evening before the Sabbath and sometimes on the morning of the Sabbath, sometimes even on plain days he used to sit with us outside his house and favor us with his wisdom. He sat on a piece of wood and leaned against a wall facing the south, and spoke to us of unearthly things. Often he sat on the north side, sometimes on the west side, at times on the east side; and sometimes he sat in the courtyard of the synagogue. Often he took walks with us to places near the city, and in all these places he discoursed with us of great and holy things. He told us that he was a river of flowing water which purified of

all stain. He told us that in comparison with him all the sages of Israel were like an onion peel. And one day we learned from him that he was the most modest of all famous men.

"And even after he caught his cough, he went walking with us and instructed us. In those days a great fire went out from his eyes, especially on the holy Sabbath when he sang the praises of the Lord and as he sat at table on the night of the Sabbath and held the cup in his hand in silence before he said the blessing."

"He was a wonderful man," sobbed Esther. "Can you tell me about his last years?"

"In the last years of his life," said Rabbi Nathan, "he often told us stories. When he was sad, he told us stories until he was happy again. And they were the most beautiful stories which a man has ever told. The most beautiful of all his stories is the story of the Seven Infirm Beggars."

"Tell me the story," Esther begged him.

Rabbi Nathan embraced his round shoulders, rolled his eyes, and spoke as if in a dream:

"And the blind beggar said to them: Do you think that I am blind? I am not blind, but the time of the whole world is for me not one moment! And I, I was a little child at that time. And I was there, and I spoke and said: I remember all these stories, — and I do not remember. But they went on and said: It is a story older than all the others. And they were much amazed that the child remembered best of all.

"However, a great eagle came and knocked on the tower and told them to descend by order of their ages, the most aged descending first. And he made them all go down from the tower. But he made the child go down first, and the old man came last: for the youngest was the oldest, and the oldest was younger than all the others — "

LITTLE JOHN

by

Herbert Westen

IT was the year of unusual weather throughout the world. July twenty-second came still-born to San Francisco. A dead, gray curtain of fog had fallen around the city during the night and there had been no dawn. There was only twilight, the monotonous dripping of the moisture from the buildings, and a sense of mediaeval imprisonment.

Morning decayed imperceptibly. By ten o'clock people were old and weary. The wind, which had swept in from the Pacific, bringing with it the rain, increased the feeling of desolation.

In North Beach, the pious Italian householders had hurried to burn candles in their windows. Towards noon the wind grew more fitful and went raging fretfully through the crazily laid-out streets of this section, gnawing at the corners of buildings, tugging at chimneys and lamp-posts and exciting the bewildered electric signboards. The old Buona Sera Hotel, standing in triangular isolation on Columbus Avenue, groaned under the lashing it was receiving. The wind had driven the rain against its sun-beaten exterior until the faded, yellow clapboards appeared to drip with the sodden colors of the earth. The streets were deserted, except for the small, bent figure of a man, which a sudden gust hurled around a sharp corner of the

building and pinned against the earth-colored side. There he remained helpless for a moment, a fear-stricken object, until he managed to free himself and cut a zigzag path down Columbus Avenue. Just ahead a single electric light burned dully at the hotel entrance. The figure reached the light with obvious relief. He was not too soon. The wind had stalked him and was shrieking and shaking the corner of the building with vindictive force. The blast bent in a window pane on the third floor and it crackled eerily to the pavement. The sky was stabbed with lightning and there was an ominous rumbling over the hills which drowned the chimes on the Church of *Pietro e Paolo*, attempting to inform this section that it was high noon. The searching wind swept across the apron and tore at the wooden pillars supporting the entrance to the hotel. But the figure had scuttled inside at the first sign of trouble.

The deserted bar-room of the Buona Sera Hotel offered a retreat from the storm, but nothing else. The little man stood dripping inside the door until he regained his breath and then shuffled down the long, familiar room to the exit at the other end.

For the past seven years John Sanguinetti, each noon and each evening, excepting the Sabbath, had stopped at the Buona Sera, on his way home, to drink two glasses of the immature red wine bootlegged upstairs in this Italian boarding house. There had been a time when the Buona Sera, like many places of its kind in San Francisco, purveyed better wine and housed more gallant guests. But men came with a new law and drove the tipplers upstairs where they sat in bare bedrooms behind drawn shades and secretly drank the wine which became poorer each year. Song was silenced and many of the boarders took wives to bed from sheer boredom.

It was to this haven that the slight figure of John Sanguinetti

was headed. He paused at the foot of the stairway to search nervously for the necessary coins; these once in hand, he ascended. The hallway on the second floor reeked with the sweet, sickening odor of disinfectant, but John sniffed greedily. He paused outside of Room 211 to make certain that his hand contained the correct amount of money, then he tapped on the door.

This routine never varied. Twice each day John would tap on the door of Room 211 for his glass of red wine. It would be a timid tap, and it would cause those three big men, whom John always found sitting around the wine-stained table at these hours, to nod knowingly:

"It is little John."

Then the Italian bootlegger would turn the key in the lock and little John, admitted, would scurry fearfully across the room to the far corner at the left, scrupulously keeping his watery little eyes averted from those awesome hulks at the table, and wait, standing up, for his wine. The bootlegger would step over to him with a pitcher and a glass, and John, unclutching his hand, would drop his fifteen cents into the waiting palm, gulp his wine quickly, remain irresolutely for the house's short return drink, and scuttle bug-like from the room.

On this particular day there was no indication that anything more momentous than the weather was going to enter little John's life. As the door closed behind his shuffling, inoffensive figure these three big men — the shaggy longshoreman with the hair bristling from his open shirt, the mountainous Irish detective-sergeant, pot-bellied and red of face, and the massive, pock-marked plumber with the bridge of his nose broken — who met in this room twice each workday, at noon to wash down their lunch with wine and at night for several rounds of the inspiriting *grappa* before resting the evening with their wives,

smiled in a superior manner, and the longshoreman slapped his big thigh, the policeman winked his pig-like eye, and the plumber gave a short, rasping laugh — as they did each time when little John left. Poor John was such a funny little guy, so suspicious, so scared of everything.

Little John was one of North Beach's leading undertakers. He was far more fascinating than religion. Whenever he appeared, with his ridiculous, shoe-string necktie, limned against his gleaming, stiff-bosomed shirt, always fresh from the laundry, and his brave little mustache, he had never failed, in seven years, to sink these habitués of the Buona Sera Hotel in introspection. His entire dress seemed to symbolize his profession to them: the quaintly cut black suit, hanging loosely from his stooped, elfin frame, his carefully polished boots, the antiquated black derby, and the old, sacky overcoat, now turning green, with its worn, velvet collar. He carried a *manzanita* cane. It was twisted, possibly like little John's soul, only little John did not know much about souls. Souls had left bodies before bodies came to him.

"He'll get us all some day!" these three big men would say. Then they would laugh, and spit on the floor, and the house would buy a round of drinks.

Exhilarated by the wine, little John hurried downstairs. The wind, if anything, had increased in violence. The sheet-iron signboard outside, proclaiming the Buona Sera Hotel a "Rendezvous for Gentlemen," creaked on its hinges. Up the street a garbage can, torn from its mooring, rattled crazily down over the cobblestones. Little John pulled his shapeless overcoat closer around him, took a firmer grip of his cane, and shuffled out into the gale. He struggled across the street, fought for the protection of the buildings and wrestled his way home to

lunch, his cane beating a weird rhythm on the wet pavement. By the time he had reached the entrance to his flat the effect of the wine had worn off. On calmer days the exhilaration would have lasted well into the soup.

He scraped his feet meticulously on the edge of the worn front step leading to the porch before meekly entering. The odor of fish and garlic warmed him as he tiptoed down the long, narrow, ill-lighted hallway to a small table at the rear. Upon this table little John carefully placed his dripping derby. He was very painstaking about this. Upon one occasion, years ago, when it had been his custom to hang the derby, it had fallen to the floor and received a dent. Little John never quite forgot the shock of this accident.

After removing his overcoat he slipped silently into the bathroom, where he washed his hands for the second time since he had left his work at the "parlor." The hands emerged from the warm water white and fluttering. They were well-formed hands, and when warm, interesting to observe. When cold, they were veined and red, and little John sought to hide them.

He left the bathroom regretfully. It was the only room in the house where he felt at home. The visit to the Buona Sera and the ritual in the bathroom were truancies he allowed himself before facing the ordeal with his wife. He had grown to know what to expect, but he had never been able to philosophize these things out of the realm of fear and pain. He knew that his wife's boarder would have arrived home for his lunch. He knew that when he entered the dining room this hulking Gargantua, who drove a Garbarini fish truck, would be stretched out possessively before the table, two massive forearms projecting belligerently from his sheared sleeves. He knew that the man would boom out a patronizing, "Hello, John!" and

then turn scornfully away. He knew that his wife would serve the boarder first, and then would seat herself beside him, leaving little John alone on the other side of the table. He knew . . . other things.

Once, when the boarder, half-drunk on *grappa*, had playfully picked little John up by the seat of his trousers, little John had almost fainted. He had fled from the house to hide in his undertaking parlor, where he remained all night. For days afterwards the buildings he passed on his way home took on strange, new shapes, and John caught himself consciously thrilling to beauty for the first time in his life. This made him fear the boarder more than ever.

Little John made no move to kiss his wife when he entered the dining room. Nor did she expect a salutation of this kind from him. She was engaged in placing a steaming *chipino*, the boarder's favorite dish, before him as John made his presence known by an apologetic cough. She straightened, towering over her mate. She was an ample woman, dark and sensual, with powdered remnants of a coarser type of Latin beauty. A curt fling of her head, signifying irritation rather than greeting, indicated that she had become aware of his presence. Then she turned back to the boarder, fawning over him like a sly animal. Little John said something, he wasn't quite sure what it was, and slid into his chair.

His wife, after satisfying herself that the boarder's immediate gustatory needs had been taken care of, playfully patted his belly as she remarked significantly that he must eat lots if he wished to keep strong, and seated herself beside him. This was the most terrifying part of the little man's day—to feel these two great creatures allied there, across the table, against him, crouched on buttocks too large for their chairs, flaunting their strength in his face, sucking in their food, licking their lips,

nostrils dilated as their breathing grew heavier with the progress of the meal. He heard his wife laugh contemptuously and he felt through a growing numbness that the boarder had passed a remark about him. He could sense their feet kissing under the table, legs playing against each other suggestively, thighs meeting. But he felt no jealousy. Even on that night when he first missed his wife from his bed he had only experienced dumb bewilderment, and then relief. After that he had lain still on the edge of the bed pretending to be asleep. He felt that this was a very wise thing to do.

It never occurred to little John to remonstrate, or to leave her. He would not have known what to do with himself. So when she suddenly broke in with a, "John, get up and get Frank another cup of coffee!" the little man arose dutifully, as he always did, and trotted out into the kitchen. On his way he thought he caught a taunting laugh, and their whispered words.

Late that afternoon John heard that the boarder was dead. His assistant, an aggressive youth who was determined to get ahead in the business, came hurrying in to little John's office with the triumphant announcement that there was a "case" — an accident case.

"Came in from the Central Emergency," the youth added. John nodded as if to convey that he had known of it all the time. Carefully folding and laying aside the newspaper he had been reading he arose and passed to the rear room, pausing to blow his nose hard before turning to the case. The recognition was purely professional. People who came to little John in this condition were roughly divided into two classes — those he knew and those he did not know. He knew this one. He leaned over in a business-like manner to inspect the hospital identification tag, tied to the big toe, to make certain. His

assistant, who kept himself well informed regarding such things, explained that the truck driver, while rounding a curve, had his attention distracted by the face of a pretty woman in the window of a neighboring flat, had skidded on the wet pavement, and was instantly killed. John nodded again as he stripped the cadaver and ordered his assistant to wash it. As soon as the youth had departed for the arsenic, the little undertaker stepped over and carefully closed the door.

For several minutes little John stood motionless before the enormous body, his active little eyes playing like points of light over the imposing array of muscles, the knotted biceps, the balloon thighs, the cushiony chest covered with coarse, matted hair. Never had he felt so at home with the boarder. He moved nearer until he was close enough for the thing to spring at him if it desired. But nothing happened. Little John drew a sharp breath. Then he giggled.

Reaching over, he lifted a huge, hairy arm, inspected the interesting arrangement of muscles, and let it fall with a thud to the marble slab. Deftly, he pried back the eyelids, revealing a spectral stare in which little John found no recognition. gingerly then, he punched the rounded muscles of the shoulders. Gaining confidence, around the slab he went, highly delighted, poking and prodding. A foolish little tune broke from his lips, "Da, de-da, de-da, da . . ." He pursed his lips and tried to whistle. Then he tried it through his teeth. That was better! He liked to whistle through his teeth . . . He was almost out of breath now . . . "Da, de-da, de-da, da." And little John sang — how he sang! — until the startled assistant came hurrying back with the arsenic.

It occurred to little John then to kill his wife. A very business-like little man, John, however, decided that everything

should come at its proper time. He went methodically about his duties of making the boarder presentable for the funeral, disposing of the case in an efficient manner. He finished combing the boarder's hair, laid the comb on a corner of the slab and stepped back to view the result of his labor with the satisfied eye of the gifted craftsman. The crackling of thunder and a violent gust of wind which shook the building brought him back to reality.

"Looks like another storm," his assistant volunteered.
"Damnedest weather I ever see."

Little John shivered, glanced at his watch and sought his overcoat. He put on his derby, grasped his crooked cane and, after a few parting words of instruction to his assistant, tottered out into the storm and went off, down Columbus Avenue.

The timid knock that trembled impatiently on the door of Room 211 of the Buona Sera Hotel that evening promised nothing out of the ordinary. As little John scuttled into the room the plumber, the longshoreman and the Irish detective-sergeant could not, of course, have known that little John was not little John at all. The bootlegger came over with the customary glass of wine and little John gulped it quickly. He was trembling with suppressed excitement. The proffer of the second libation "on the house" was waved disdainfully aside as John, with a grander gesture calculated to take in all those in the room, audaciously commanded:

"Buy' um a drink!"

The plumber, the longshoreman and the Irish detective-sergeant looked at each other uncertainly and scraped their feet nervously on the floor. Here was a social emergency without a precedent. A sense of sin held them constrained. The bootlegger, however, avid for business, came over with

the pitcher and filled clean glasses with red wine. The Irish detective-sergeant recovered himself in time to call for stronger water. The effect was salutary. He was the first of the trio to become conscious of his responsibility as a gentleman, and after they had solemnly drunk to little John's health, he masterfully proposed that the compliment be returned. By this time the plumber and the longshoreman, emboldened by their companion's success, asserted themselves and ordered the *grappa*. "Down she goes!" they said, and down the drinks went, little John beaming from the warmth of the wine and the companionship. The plumber, inspired by the liquor, rose to new heights to exclaim:

"Come on, now, Mister Sanguietti, that's no stuff for a man to be drinkin'!"

He motioned to the bootlegger to pour John a shot of the fiery fluid. And that night little John got very drunk.

As the evening wore on time ceased to have a significance. Wives were forgotten as the spirit of brotherly love united these men. The Irish detective-sergeant sang sentimental songs and wept in his cup; the longshoreman accounted for an astonishing number of smutty stories, and the plumber revealed himself as the shrewd hero of a dozen kitchen *amours*. John swelled with importance as being in such company and the companionable gibes poked at his profession drew him into unison with these fine fellows.

At last the bootlegger swore that he would serve no more drinks. So the prolonged ceremonial of leave-taking began. They shook hands several times around and pledged undying friendship. If it was somewhat maudlin, it also was somewhat heartbreaking. When John finally departed he was wearing the Irish detective-sergeant's shield and the longshoreman's battered hat. His derby was lying under the bed, dented and stained

with wine. His crooked cane was hanging to the chandelier. But he carried himself magnificently.

The storm still held the streets awash when he stepped out, but John was quite oblivious to the elements. Only once, when a particularly violent gust of wind hurled him against a lamp-post, did the little man give vent to his feelings.

"God damn it!" cried little John. "God damn such weather!"

It was almost two o'clock when he stumbled up the front steps to his flat. Strange, unreal emotions were picking at his nerves. The giddiness produced by the alcohol had disappeared before a stronger emotional tempest which raged in his stomach and oppressed his lungs. His heart was pounding furiously against the detective-sergeant's shield and his breath was coming in short, dry gasps. For an instant, in the hallway, he faltered. He had reached unconsciously for his derby to place it on the table and was horrified not to find it on his head. So powerfully did the sense of loss and shame assail him that he thought he would faint. The contact of his trembling hand with the longshoreman's battered hat, however, steadied him. He kept it on. Past the bathroom now, past the dining room, leaving a watery trail like a little old man who had arisen from the sea. At the far end of the hallway a door leading to the bedroom stood ajar. Relentlessly little John drove himself towards it. He heard his wife's sonorous breathing, punctuated by short snorts. Courage now . . . Little John stepped inside.

For several minutes he stood swaying just over the threshold. The light in the hallway cast a half glow over her sleeping form. The white counterpane dipped and rose mountainously as it enveloped her ample curves. It had been a long time since little John had dared to study his wife at such close range. How large she was! And so still—like Frank back there. A sixth sense seemed to communicate to her the presence of another

in the room and she stirred uneasily in her sleep. Her huge thighs moved restlessly and her right arm was flung out over the vacant space beside her as if it were seeking something; a low moo escaped her lips.

The sudden movement disarranged the bed clothes in such a way as to expose a generous portion of her rear at the edge of the bed. It was a totally unexpected gesture and little John was dumbfounded. Then an awful thing happened. He laughed. The sound burst into the room full-throated and deep from a triumphant diaphragm and went echoing bravely through the silent flat. Before the startled Mrs. Sanguinetti could raise her voice against the dying medley of the storm, little John coolly reached over, and with steel-nerved fingers, pinched her bare buttock.

SAND

by

Wanda Burnett

SOMETIMES the wagon jolted into a hole and a cloud of dust rolled away to the side of the road and settled like a smother over the small blue berries of the scrubby spruce. But mostly the road was smooth and ran ahead and behind the wagon, — a string, long and thin, stretching across the desert. Only the sagebrush, the road, and the dusty blueberried spruce for miles and the sun pricking the sand. Now and then the dust, caught by a slight breeze, twirled like a funnel into the sky and was gone. Ghosts. Desert ghosts. Dancing.

I felt all scooped out and empty looking down at the desert and the purple mounds that ran like the rhythm of a song along the desert's edge. I remember. I was five then and I sat in the back of the covered-in wagon with my brother. I had on black stockings and the dust kept turning them grey. I brushed and brushed, but it did no good. Once the wagon stopped and my mother came around the back and winked at me. I told her no, but she said I'd better anyway. So I went with her. I gathered a few of the wrinkled berries and some sagebrush. When we came back my dad was standing in front of the wagon, one hand shading his eyes and the other pointing ahead. "Look," he said, "there's our road, way down there ta hell'n gone!" I didn't know where we were going. No one had told me. I had forgotten to ask.

Then we got back into the wagon and the horses went plop-plopping along the road again. Then it must have been noon because my mother opened a package and gave me a cheese sandwich and a tomato. I ate the tomato because I was thirsty and I poked a hole through the sandwich and wore it for a ring till my mother saw me, then I nibbled the crust and dropped the sandwich into the dust.

* * *

The house, standing there on the edge of the road, was gaunt and scarred and two hollow-eyed windows stared out from beneath the rusty tin roof. Steps, worn and rough, slobbered down over the lip of the open doorway. It stood there with its hands on its hips and its head cocked to one side, a fat old woman of a house. Toothless. Dirty. Old and complaining. And when the wind sweeping down the gulch whistled around the house it moaned and swayed back and forth, and on bad nights it cried. There were no coverings on the floors and a long plank table ran the full length of the dining room. The whole house smelled of sour bread dough and the kitchen shelves were lined with cans of tomatoes, opened and spoiling. I went snooping around. Someone told me it was a boarding house and that all the men from the mines would eat at our house now. I guessed that was all right. My mother was a pretty good cook, anyway.

There was an awful racket going on in the kitchen. My mother was sweeping out cans and rubbish, brushing off shelves, shaking stoves, opening cupboards, and talking fast about filthy Japs and pigs and all. Her hat still bobbed up and down on the top of her head and a streak of soot ran from under her nose like a big flowing moustache.

My dad and another man brought in the two trunks, funny

fat trunks with wall-paper linings. They set them in a small room just off the dining room, and that night when we slept there, we had to put pans and big, square bread drippers all over the beds and floor to catch the rain that poured down through the leaky tin roof. Once, when the house no longer cried and the rain had finally stopped, I saw something run along the floor. It came close to my bed and drank from the black pan of water and its eyes were little lights there in the dark room. My mother set up a candle, but the water dripping from the ceiling kept putting it out. But I guess it was a rat all right, because the next morning my dad went down into the town — there were only two stores there — and bought three big traps and I helped him carry them home.

* * *

Elva was the tall one with the sad blue eyes and her hair was a cloud of fluff above her broad face. But she wasn't much good in the kitchen, my mother said. She was slow and she kept getting in the way. But I liked her. She used to chew my gum for me — the hard spruce gum that we gathered from the pine trees. Then my mother found out and I had to chew my own gum. I remember once Elva peeled a whole water-bucket of potatoes and the potatoes were like a handful of marbles there in the bottom of the bucket and the peelings over an inch thick. My mother was mad about it, too. So Elva and I went for a walk. We walked up past the mines, through the little grove of pines, and out to the very edge of the hill. And down below we could see the desert sleeping there in the sun and the paths wandering lost-like through the sand. But when I looked, my face got stiff and my ears grew tight and I felt all choked up inside. Elva was a statue staring down — all quiet and smooth. Then she slipped away, down the hill

toward the desert. She kept sinking deeper and deeper into the sand and when I caught up with her she was making a funny little crackled sound way down in her throat. I thought she was laughing, but I guess she wasn't because when I laughed she just dug her fingers into the sand and told me not to. We went back to the house then, but that night she went for a walk alone and I didn't see her anymore.

My mother liked Bertha best. She was big and brown and healthy. Big Brown Bertha, the men called her. She moved like a house-a-fire. She could swing an ax like a man and lift a hundred pound bag of sugar with no effort at all. Once she came right through the kitchen swinging the ax back and forth in front of her and yelling — "Out of my way, out of my way, I'm mad!" Straight for the wood pile she went. She chopped her anger into little pieces and the chips flew away. Bertha — and her wood-chopping-madness.

I remember the first time my dad rang the big triangle dinner bell. He kept looking at his watch and asking my mother if it wasn't time yet and I kept telling him that I was sure it was time. I wanted to see what would happen. So he finally went out on the front porch and gave the big triangle half a dozen good smacks with an iron bar. It was like stirring up an ant hill. The men came swarming down the hill. One man fell face down in the dirt. No one bothered. They ran up the front steps and into the dining room. And when three of them jumped over the railing and fell on the porch I yelled to my dad to hit 'em — hit 'em hard, but he just stood there with the iron rod in his hand and didn't move. I peeked in through the window. The men were running around the table and bellowing, "*White bread!*" "*My God, it's white bread!*" They filled their pockets and the fronts of their bibbed overalls. They ate till their eyes bulged. They were heavy dirty men. Wild animals

from the mountains. Sometimes, when my mother looked tired, I hated them and I hid the iron rod so my dad couldn't ring the dinner bell. I thought it opened the door of the mines, too.

There was a long man there in the dining room. Long and sort of tied in the middle — a jellybean man, bulging at both ends. He stood off in a corner alone. He didn't yell about the white bread either. And when the men sat down to eat they edged him off the end of the long bench. He just sat on the floor looking around dazed and empty and once, before my mother noticed him and made him sit by the kitchen where she could serve him, he hopped under the table and began picking up the bread crumbs like a bird and the men whistled and threw handfuls of crumbs to him and caged him in with their knees. I always whispered when he was around because I thought he was deaf and dumb.

* * *

Sometimes I went with my dad to buy cigars, but mostly we just went there to talk. It was a good excuse though, the cigars. The old storekeeper had a fuzzy short beard. He was always waiting for the weather to warm up a bit so he could shave. When he talked he rubbed his hands and peered over the rims of his glasses and his voice was thin and crackled. An old granny voice. Once, when I went there alone, he invited me into his parlor. You just stepped down one step from the store and through an old worn curtain and there you were. He always kept the blinds down half way, he said, because the dust didn't show up so much then. I guess he didn't have a wife. But he had a phonograph that blossomed from its small wooden box in the corner like a huge purple morning glory and in another corner of the room a glass cabinet squatted on its short curved legs. There were a few samples of ore

scattered around on the shelves of the cabinet and way back on the bottom shelf, slumped over and dirty, there was a doll with a waxy pale face and hair that fell in yellow-brown strings over its eyes. He didn't like me to look at the doll. He got nervous when I went near the cabinet and made me sit in the little brown rocking-chair close by the phonograph. I thought it was fine listening to the record played over and over again and I rocked back and forth waiting for the words, "Oh, you great big beautiful doll, I'd like to squeeze you, but I'm afraid you'll break." I rocked closer to the cabinet. Then someone rapped on the counter and the old man slipped through the curtain, up the step, and back into the store. I went home. I told my mother about the doll and the phonograph . . . after that my brother went for the cigars.

* * *

Big Mrs. Rawls was coming down to make jelly-roll for the men. We took the kitchen door off so she could come in. She lived up the hill from our place in a tent. I guess it was easier, that way, without doors. She waddled over to a chair and oozed down over the sides and kept fanning herself and "*wheering*."

It should have been a good jelly-roll. She used almost a half a sack of flour and all the bottled jelly in the house. She rolled the dough out in big white slabs and smeared them thick with jelly, then she rolled them from one end like a carpet. But the jelly kept running out of the ends and the sides so she fastened them together with toothpicks. I followed her around with a spoon and ate all the jelly that wouldn't stay in the roll. My mother kept *ahing* and *ohing* and saying what beautiful jelly-rolls they were and Mrs. Rawls just swelled all up with pride when she slipped them into the oven. "Don't jump!" she said, "or you'll spoil the whole shootin' match."

So I held my breath and tip-toed over to the corner and sat high up on a stool. She plumped herself down in a chair and all the dishes on the shelves chattered. She made jelly-roll for everyone when she was a girl, she said. She'd even won prizes at fairs with them. And rolly-polly pudding! Well, that was something, too. She bet the men would like that.

I didn't say anything, but I could see the smoke curling out from the sides of the oven door. My mother sniffed the air a couple of times. Mrs. Rawls went on gabbing. Not noticing. Finally she went over and opened the oven. She pulled out one pan. Then she pulled out another pan. "Only the jelly burning on the edge," she said. She tried to slip them back in a hurry, but I ran over with my spoon and looked into the pans sitting on the open oven door. It was a tired jelly-roll all flat and panting. Little rivers of jelly ran around in the gluey mass of dough and the picket fence of toothpicks standing tall and thin in the middle guarded a small breathing bubble pushed up by the steam. It was like the grave on the hill back of the house.

Then I don't know. I guess everyone went kind of crazy. My mother and Bertha made Mrs. Rawls sit down in the middle of the floor and they circled the pans, steaming and hot, around her. And one empty pan, a round one with handles on both sides, they put on her head and called her Rolly-Polly, the Queen of the Jelly-Rolls. They danced round and round, in between the pans and out again. I thought my mother would be mad about not having any dessert for the men and all, but she just laughed and danced around the pans. I laughed too, then. I laughed all inside till I got a pain and had to roll all over the kitchen floor.

Bertha said to wait a minute. She ran out and brought in the screen door from the back porch and they caged Mrs. Rawls

in the corner. The top part of the door had little black bars running up and down and in one place the screen was broken and loose. Her hair fell sloppily down her face and she clumped back and forth and tried to roar. Once she reached her big paw through the cage and cuffed Bertha on the head. I ran back and forth with pans of jelly-roll. My mother said she roared because she was hungry so we stuffed the roll through the bars and the jelly ran in tears through our fingers and down our arms. Once I threw a piece through the bars and into the cage. It landed in her hair and the jelly ran down her big face and into her eyes and when it dried there it looked like drops of blood.

The men came stomping into the dining room for lunch. My mother said oh Lord, and the screen door fell to the floor and Mrs. Rawls waddled away. Her eyes were glassy and she kept swallowing the air in big gulps. I sat on the steps and watched her going home, up the hill, slowly, and little Mr. Rawls running along beside her like a nervous whisper.

The wagon came in with the supplies that afternoon and I went out to see them unloaded. The canned goods were all battered up and tomato juice was oozing out of the cans. Sometimes they left the meat and butter down on the spur for days before they brought it out to the camp and the meat would be spoiled and the butter rancid. And once they were unloading a barrel of water from the wagon. It slipped and the water ran down the thirsty road and was gone. We didn't have any water then for two days. I remember, my dad had to hire a wagon and make the thirty mile trip to the next town. It was always the water. This time the water had been put in gasoline barrels and was so strong that it couldn't even be used for dish water. I didn't mind though. I liked the smell. When my mother wasn't looking I smeared some of the grease

from the fat black barrel on my dress for perfume. It smelled of the city where we used to live.

My mother talked a lot about going home that day, and about what we could do when we got back. But that night Bertha made taffee, stretching the hot candy till it shone like fine silk threads. Some of the men came over, too, and we cleared out the dining room and danced. It was fine then. Everyone forgot about the water. There was plenty of beer anyway. Someone brought an old concertina and before the night was over a violin showed up and wheezed along beside the concertina.

And I sat high on the table and watched . . .

I guess he'd been knocking a long time out there on the front porch. He didn't generally walk right in like that. He looked tired and small and scared. He'd been running, too. "Give old man Rawls a drink!" someone said. But when he got the drink he just kept picking it up and setting it down again, all lost. And finally they pulled him into the square of dancers and he danced round and round.

There was a terrible racket then. Everyone clapped and stomped louder than ever. And when Mr. Rawls yelled, "Cupped! God damn it! Cupped, I say!" everyone thought he was drunk and they clapped him on the back and danced faster and faster. My mother gave him another glass of beer and my dad told him to dive right in, but he wouldn't take it. He said, she's being cupped again, my wife, and sort of whimpered. Then he ran out of the door and into the dark.

My mother said, Oh, Lord, and ran after him. And I ran after her. Straight up the hill we went. It was black. I kept stumbling. Then we were there, in front of the tent. The shadows from the candle inside the tent made the figures moving around look old and bent in the middle and I was afraid to go in.

I sat outside in the dark listening to the moaning inside. Once a coyote howled far up in the hills and I wished I'd gone in then.

I looked in under the tent. A mountain covered with a white sheet moved up and down on a long bed. Hands came out from the sheet and clawed the air — big hands — Mrs. Rawl's hands. And a doctor walked back and forth with bottles and spoons. Pretty soon my mother came out and we went home. She didn't say much. I asked her what about Mrs. Rawls and she said, what did I mean tagging along when I was supposed to be in bed? So I didn't say any more.

The next morning a wagon came slowly down the mountain, past the boarding house, and on through the town. It was all covered in and solemn. I waved to Mr. Rawls, but he just walked on with his head down — following back of the wagon.

I don't know. I guess it must have been the jelly-roll that did it. My mother and Bertha were putting the screen door back on its hinges and wiping the bars with a big cloth and crying a little. I heard my mother tell Bertha that it was from excitement and overeating that Mrs. Rawls had died. And her heart. I went away then. I went out and gathered pine cones and I wondered about Mrs. Rawls, and why Mr. Rawls walked back of the wagon with his head bent down. I thought of the awfully big hole they'd have to dig for Mrs. Rawls. They couldn't dig it in the sand. The sand would crawl back in and there wouldn't be room for her.

He never came back, though — Mr. Rawls. The people waited and waited for him. Someone said he had gone all the way to California — walking right on through the Nevada desert. Following the sun. No one knew. The tent stayed on the hill for days and days and the wind rushing through the open flaps of the doorway pulled and tore at the canvas. Then one morning I ran up the hill, and the tent was gone and only

the big square, vacant and smooth, was left. I never went back anymore.

* * *

It was no use, my mother said, she wouldn't stay another day. Saloons, and everything springing up right next door and all. Drunken men lolling on our front porch. And our bedroom window looking into a saloon. Hammering. Hammering. All day long. And cussing, and spitting and chewing. I thought it was pretty bad, too, and I went out and kicked the toes out of my shoes. I kicked the blocks of wood that had been cut from the planks. I kicked them right at the men. I found a big box of nails and lugged them away. I hid them in the cellar. I thought saloons must be pretty bad.

I kind of hated to see my mother go, but I helped her pack and I sat on the top of the trunks so she could fasten the locks. I didn't know what I'd do when she left. Just go on shelling pinenuts, I guess, and maybe walk up the hill and look down into the desert. And maybe go down and see the old man and listen to the phonograph. But I wished Elva would come back. Bertha was no good. She wouldn't walk. I watched my mother take the heavy sack of pinenuts down from the shelf and tie a knot in the top.

I went out and picked an armful of the wild goldenrod that smiled around the dismal grey sheds in the back yard and thought of the time Bertha had drenched the feathery blossoms with a pan of steaming water. The blossoms had turned brown and slumped to the earth like a heavy sigh. I hated Bertha then. I hated her now when I thought of it. When I go home, I thought, I'll take some of the roots buried in the sandy soil and plant them in our town — I'll take the desert, and its warm yellow smell back home.

I ran around the house and out to the front with the

flowers and my mother boosted me up into the back of the wagon. There were a lot of people there and they stood in a fringe around the wagon. Some of the women dabbed at the corners of their eyes with their white aprons. And Sam gave my mother a box of candy tied with a bright red ribbon. He didn't look like a jellybean anymore and I noticed his hands, boney, loose, and worried, hanging from his wrists.

Then, somehow, I had the big doll in my arms and its eyes opened and shut and its hair still hung in long yellow-brown strings. Its face was dusty and smudged with tears and I held it tight in my arms.

* * *

The wagon moved slowly down the hill and into the desert. The wind had blown the sand into crinkled waves along the sides of the road, and on the hill, just before we dipped into the desert, I noticed the little blue berries of the spruce were withered old faces hanging dead on the branches. The dust still rolled from under the wagon in clouds and settled over the bushes and the long thin tongue of a road slipped from under the wagon, down the hill.

Then we were there — there in front of the depot and I had a big lump in my throat and I couldn't cry. The depot was all hollowed out inside and dark and dirty. My dad bought me an all day sucker, an orange one, and a little glass pitcher that sparkled like the sand in the sun away back there in the desert. When I looked at the pitcher, the lump in my throat got bigger and bigger and I felt all pulled out from the middle again. I ran away, then. I ran up back of the depot. The roofs of the houses on the hillside were flat black hands stretched out in the sun.

It was no use. I wouldn't say goodbye to them, to my

mother and father and brother, down there waiting for the train. I'd stay on the hill of sand back of the depot. I took off my shoes and stockings and dug my toes deep into the sun-warmed sand.

I filled the pitcher and the sand poured out, trickling through my fingers, and fell in a spatter of diamonds down the front of my dress. I filled it again and again. The sand was like a river flowing on and on down to the depot and over the tracks. And I waded knee-deep in the river.

The train. Howling. I'd wash it off the tracks. I'd bury it deep in the river. I filled the pitcher again.

Faster! Faster! More sand poured from the pitcher and danced down the hill. The moaning whistle grew louder. The train hissed and screamed and coughed white clouds into the sky. They floated up over the depot roof and I watched them go to nothing.

Then my mother, puffing and panting, whisked me out of the river and down the hill. The pitcher slipped from my fingers and the sand trickled away, a patch of tiny broken smiles scattered in the sun.

NAPOLEON'S HAT UNDER GLASS

by

Manuel Komroff

IN the gorgeous palace of Fontainebleau, just outside of Paris, on an embroidered silk cushion in a glass case, rests Napoleon's hat. This is the very hat he wore when returning from Elba he saluted his gathering army . . . the army that he led into the field of Waterloo. But all this was many years ago, over a hundred years ago, guides say when they conduct the large parties of visitors through the palace.

And before this glass case with its showpiece of history now stood a newly married peasant couple from the country. She was a rosy cheeked farmer's daughter and he was the son of a farmer in southern France. This was their honeymoon.

They stood before the glass case. She fingered her colored ribbons and he stared at the black felt hat in the case. Their red faces and big red hands were reflected in the glass. Their bodies seemed to sway just as they had swayed that very week when the village priest stood before them and recited the marriage vows.

"He was the greatest man in the world," she said.

"Yes, he was a great man. He was Emperor of almost the whole world."

"May his soul rest in peace."

"It must be a hard job to be an Emperor. I don't think I would like it. Too many papers and documents to read, and

everything is . . . like in the fall of the year when we have to close ourselves in the house and the leaves become crisp and brittle. It don't seem natural to be an Emperor, does it?"

"Sure not, Emil. It must be very hard. But I think you could do anything you wanted to do. Nobody dreamed you would have the chicken house finished this summer, especially with all the trouble we had with the old wine barrels that leaked and the bugs on the vegetables. But an Emperor don't have to read many papers. They tell him what it says and all he must do is to sign his name. And you can do that, can't you, Emil?"

"Sure."

"But it would be harder for me, Emil. This would be a nice place to live. But the servants would be watching you all day long. I would hate to have strange people watching me; but if you were the Emperor I would just have to do it and say nothing."

"Do what, Marie?"

"Oh, just do everything. Watch the kitchen to see that the rascals did not steal and do the things that ladies do, like making up the beds and sewing up new dresses. And taking care of the house."

"It must be a hard job to be an Emperor. I don't think I would like it."

"If you wanted to be, I am sure you could be anything you like. You are so strong, — and I love you so much."

At length they moved away from the glass case containing Napoleon's hat, and walked out into the gardens. Here they ate their lunch and looked into each other's eyes.

After a long silence she looked up and said; "You know, Emil, we should go back to the Palace before it closes and see the hat again."

"Poor Napoleon," Emil said.

"Yes. It is so sad. He was once Emperor of the whole world, almost, and now he is dead."

They walked back to have another look at the hat. And in the morning, under the pretext that it was on the way to the station, they went again and had a last gaze at Napoleon's hat under glass.

On the train she sighed; "It was a wonderful honeymoon, wasn't it, Emil."

"Sure."

Then she whispered in his ear. "I love you, Emil."

He sat up straight and held her red hand. "I — thought maybe you loved Napoleon."

"Oh, yes, but that is different, Emil."

"How different?"

"Well, he is dead and I feel so sorry for him — it is so sad. He was such a great man and it is such a hard job to be an Emperor. You said yourself it was — you know you did."

"Yes, I said so, Marie, but I was thinking of myself and not Napoleon. It was easy for him because he always . . . well he was all the time doing something big . . . he was a general. It is easy for a general to do all kinds of things."

"He was very brave and that is why . . ."

"That's why you love him."

"I love you too, Emil. I want you to be a great man and have people save your hat and . . . but not to be the Emperor."

Emil was jealous of Napoleon. He kept looking out of the train window watching the green fields and the long rows of tall poplars.

In the evening they were back on the farm. The fragrance of the green shrubbery and the loose damp earth filled their nostrils. In places the grass had grown during their absence.

Here was a chance for a second harvest and they lost no time in removing their holiday clothes and getting back into their large comfortable wooden shoes. The shoes that have stamped down the fields of France for centuries. There was only an hour or two before sundown.

At night as they lay in bed breathing heavily, she whispered; "Oh, Emil, it is so good to be home again."

He pressed her hand.

"It must be hard to live in a palace," she added.

Again he pressed her hand.

"And so sad."

"You are thinking of the dead Emperor's hat!" He let go her hand.

"No, Emil, I was thinking, only foolishness. I love you, Emil."

She put her arms about him and he kissed her eyes and fleshy cheeks and her moist red mouth — moist with the dew of the earth.

And Napoleon never came between them again. Only once did he again appear before them. This happened about a year later when Emil became the proud father of a baby boy.

"He is a prize baby," said the father.

And she tickled the child under the chin and added; "We will put him on exhibition . . . under glass."

Then they went through all the names of the ancient kings and Emperors that they could recall, but to their rural ears, each sounded foreign and sad.

The grapes were ripe and there was much work to be done around the place but at odd moments they deliberated and often thought of Napoleon's hat in the show case. But in the end they named their little son, John.

SPRING EVENING

by

James T. Farrell

GEORGE walked down Euclid Avenue with Jack, his good old pal from those never-to-be-forgotten high school days. It was a tree-arched street, reposedful in the accumulating spring twilight. Both its sidewalks were rowed with low and spectacular specimens of American suburban architecture, which were, principally, red-brick affairs rising above neat lawns and clipped shrubbery. Automobiles lined the curbs. Dozy, slippered people were on front porches and benches. Here and there a potbelly stood, ruminating while he played the hose across grass which sparkled with wet; sprinklers were gurgling. George and Jack strolled along.

Wouldn't it be swell tuh be out in the country? George said.

It ud be the nuts, Jack said.

Yeh! It ud be the nuts all right. Jus' think! Tuh be able to go up tuh Maine, Bar Harbor or one uh them joints, and tuh park yere fanny at a swell resort where Mr. and Mrs. Richbitch always stay. That's the cat's nuts, and I don't mean maybe. No sir!

Yeah! That ud be the nuts. It ud be nothing at all the same as stayin' at a lousy joint like Cedar Lake. Why do you know, there actually wasn't a decent lookin' mama up there

las' summer. They all looked like they forgot to take dere false faces off, said Jack.

They walked along, and George thought of the office. He saw it plainly, the cramped room with his desk in a corner, the clatter of typewriters and adding machines, the roar of the loop crashing dustily through the opened window, himself at his desk, sweating like a bastard, cooped up on grand spring days, adding, adding, adding columns and columns of figures. It was lousy work all right. He looked wistfully at the sky, and told himself that Nature was a grand thing all right. If he ever got a break in the luck, he would certainly give the job the goby just like that, and get himself a swell joint somewhere in the country, close to Nature. Nature must be a pretty swell affair all right, out there in the country, where a guy could sit in the shade of a big tree, or go fishing, or take a broad in the forest where it would be all alone and quiet, and not have to bring her to a hotel where it was all dark and stuffy and hot; and in the country, the sunlight would be warmer and clearer and more shiny, the stars brighter, and the moon bigger; the air would be sweeter and give a guy a better appetite, and he would get healthier. It would be the nuts to go to the country and get closer to Nature. If only he would get a break, have some rich bimbo go gagga over him, clean up heavy on the ponies, or maybe enter and win a dance marathon and get signed up for Hollywood.

Gee, it ud be the nuts to be a big shot; and just loll about on the beach on these nice warm days, said George. Yuh could have a swell broad by yere side, and have yere Marmon roadster parked waitin' for yuh with James tuh spin yuh to wherever yuh wanted uh go, an after a swim yuh could take some mama along, and dash out to a roadhouse and get a real chicken feed.

Yeh, wouldn't it be the nuts? said Jack.

It wouldn't be no ordinary beach where, what the hell do yuh call 'em, the hoipolloi go. No sirreee. It would be a private beach of some ritzy joint like the South Shore Country Club, an exclusive dive whose members ud all be filthy with dough.

I'd get 'em off these hot days, sittin' in my white flannels with some rich bim on the veranda of the South Shore Country Club, sippin' my Martini, said Jack.

Well I'd be sippin' a Johnny Walker, said George.

Then wouldn't life be the nuts. You could live like uh royal king, and I don' mean maybe. You could play a round uh golf early in the mornin' before it got too hot, and then have James drive yuh some place for a nice breakfast, and then rest a while, and then take a dip in the lake, and then dine like the King of Italy, and then just loll away the afternoon, or maybe go to the races and play for some small change, you know a thousand bucks or so, and maybe have yere own stable uh nags, and have a harem uh mamas, and keep them each in a swell apartment, and take turns sleepin' with yuh. I tell yuh life ud be the nuts then, said Jack.

And yuh could winter in Florida, and now and then take a littull airplane hop over to London and to see yere foreign banker. and tuh take a few turns out uh the London stock exchange, and then dash over to Paris for some French mamas, and yuh could take in the season at Deauville, and then finish it off by jazzing some hot Spanish senoritas, said George.

It ud be the nuts, Jack said.

Yeh, said George.

They strolled along in silence, puffing away at their Camels. George had, or believed that he bad a pain in his heart. Heartburn! He would have to cut down on his smoking. But he might just as well finish the one he was having. No use wasting

them. He wasn't getting enough exercise either. He would have to watch that, and get a lotta tennis and golf and swimming this summer, and then next winter join the Y. He would get up early in the morning, and take a little hike before breakfast. Goddamn it, it was lousy; getting up, dashing for a train, and half the time not getting a seat. And at noon a guy had to dash out, and eat at the counter in a place jammed with jabbering broads. And then having to work all day too. He wished that he had a job working outside. But then, most outside jobs were common laborers' jobs, and they had no future. It would be the nuts though if he could land a good selling job, maybe travelling, seeing America, riding swell on Pullmans, stopping at good hotels, and getting himself some brand new broad every night. That would be the nuts all right. Tomorrow morning, he would be getting up early, and dashing for the train, and then he'd be sweating all day in the office. Jesus Christ! Some guys just didn't know how lucky they were.

I'm gonna play Blood'l-Tell tomorrow, said George.

That goddamn nag, said Jack.

You watch! I'm playin' it tuh place. You watch and see, becuz I got my system, and it don't go wrong, said George.

Well, if yuh wanna real tip, take this. Play Mickey Gallagher in the fourth, said Jack.

That bitch! said George.

All right, you wait and see, said Jack.

I got my system, said George.

Coming to Jackson Park, they entered by a path through the bushes and came out upon the golf course. It was already dark, and the scene was deserted, except for a few passing golfers. A foursome passed homeward; two of the group were girls whom Jack and Georg agreed were swell lays with grand toilets. They slowly passed on along the grass stretch. Looking

back, they could see the rising hulk of the Southmore Hotel at Sixty-seventh and Stoney Island, and further along, the ugly red pyramid of the Balaban and Katz Tower Theatre at Sixty-third. They discussed going to a movie, but decided not to, because it was too hot, and too swell a night to be wasted on the movies. It was nice out all right, they agreed, and they walked on. Jack said that he would like to have just five percent of what the guys got in Jackson Park in the summer time. George said that if he did, he wouldn't have a backbone. Jack said that he had a lot of stuff. It made George secretly worried over one of his recurrent fears: was he sterile? He had never got a jane in trouble. Maybe he was. But he couldn't tell anyone, expose his fear, even to Jack. Jack would laugh at him. There was no real reason to suspect that he was. But he was afraid, and the fear was always drumming away at him.

Jack told an anecdote about a pig he had picked up once. She was too lousy and scummy to take a chance on, but he said he let her go ahead and do you know and when he got home he'd washed his mouth out with soap because he'd kissed her. He said he gave her half a buck. George spoke of the lousy bitch he had gotten one night at the Midway Gardens a couple of years ago when the Gardens was the place to go to if you wanted to dance or pick up some easy broads and they had that hot band, the Memphis Melody Boys with Volley La Forge (a swell guy, Jack knew him) in the orchestra. That was one red hot band all right, you bet. Well, George said, he had taken this bim over to the island in Washington Park, and they had gotten along nice, and she had seemed to be one blazing party and he was beginning to think that he was going to get something pretty nice when damnit if she didn't turn out to be a muff diver. Of course he had let her do her stuff, but the lousy bitch, to think of being that way, anyway. He had felt like busting her teeth down her throat,

and he still couldn't understand why he didn't let her have one. Jack said that when broads were low, they were low, like no fellow could be low, except maybe a fairy.

They sat under a tree at the edge of the golf course.

That's a nice sky, said George.

Yeh, said Jack.

You know, I wish I had a lotta bucks, said George.

Who don't? said Jack.

Now if I was in some racket like Al Capone? said George.

You'd get yere ears shot off, said Jack.

It ud be worth the chance, said George.

Boloney, said Jack.

They lit cigarettes, and George tried to convince Jack that he wouldn't mind taking the chances that go with being a big shot in the gang wars. Then the conversation drifted back to the good old days, when they were at St. Cyril High School.

Remember the time Van Der Shans kicked us out of geometry, and we went to the music room, and organized a band with all the instruments, George said.

And Jumps was one of the gang, Jack said.

Yeh, it was too bad about Jumps. He was such a swell guy. And yah know, he woulda been a dandy athlete. He got too smart. He wasn't so smart like Lusk and those guys in school. Why Christ he was the biggest drunkard in the class, outside of Jimmy. And then he went and got goofy. I hear he's a communist, and married some rich broad.

Well, that's not so bad, said Jack.

He always ustuh come to dances with a new broad every-time, and he usually had a keen one.

Yeh, he was a good guy, said Jack.

But now he's writin' a lotta goofy junk, and he's went and lost his religion, said George.

It all goes tuh show that yuh never know what a guy's gonna become. Now there was Jumps a great football player, winning more letters than any guy in school, becoming too smart and an atheist, said Jack. Now who would uh ever thought he'd uh turned out like that, he added.

You never kin tell, said George.

And say, remember the time we went down to play De La Salle of Joliet, and we broke the suburban car window out in Argo? said Jack.

And remember the trolley car at Bourbonais, when we got skunked at St. Viator's? said Jack.

Yeh, said Jack.

And at Joliet when Bud walked into the railroad station with a cigar bigger'n he was, and there was coach Harry watching him. Jesus that was a scream! said George.

And the surprise party on Jimmy before we played St. Mel's in our senior years, when we all got drunk and Jumps slept in Mac's hallway, and they called the paddywagon on him, and then we all hadda play the next afternoon, said Jack.

Yeh, said George.

Them was the days, said Jack, with an audible sigh.

I wish we had 'em back, said George.

Don't I, said Jack.

Nostalgia ached inside of George. He recalled things, events with a sentimental pain, and he started singing the popular songs of other days as an outlet for and a stimulus to his unravelling memories. He sang the choruses of Oogie Oogie Wa Wa that Waring's Pennsylvanians had played at the Tivoli, The Sheik, Saw Mill River Road that Isham Jones' orchestra had played when they were at Trianon, Mean Mean Mama, Oh

Gee, Oh Gosh, Oh Golly, I'm In Love; Three O'clock In The Morning, I Hear You Calling Yoo Hoo that they were playing at Teresa Dolan's the first time he had danced with that broad Sally Schmalski who had taken him over to Jackson Park, and I'm Runnin' Wild that he had heard the time he had taken Coletta to College Inn. Thinking of Coletta, he started singing:

I don't know why I should cry over you,
Sigh over you,
Or even feel blue.

Then he sang:

You know you belong to somebody else,
So why don't you leave me alone?

And then :

You're the kind of a girl that men forget;
Just a toy to enjoy for a while;
For when men settle down, they'll always find,
An old fashioned girl with an old fashioned smile;
And you'll soon realize that you're not so wise,
When the years bring you tears of regret.
When they play Here Comes The Bride,
You'll stand outside.

You're the kind of a girl that men forget.

He grew soft and sentimental. Jack complimented him on his memory of old songs, and George swelled with pride. They sat, revelling in the commonplace anecdotes of the past.

George was tired, and he thought of the morning, and the day's work. To erase the unpleasant anticipations caused by these thoughts, he turned his mind to Coletta. He had met her at his class' Senior Prom. When anyone mentioned her, he always said: Why that goddamn bitch! Yet he loved her. Coletta! He loved her. He got goofy everytime he thought of her. He looked at the stars, and soulgazing, he was thrilled and inspired

with a new and, to him, a devout and sacred love for her. Once he had been walking home with her, after they had been to Cocoanut Grove, and he had seemed excited and mushy. That night, she had danced close to him, and he had thought that she had shimmied a little; and going home, she had allowed him to put his arm around her. They had been walking home, and it had been a swell night, like the present one, and he had been thrilled and happy and all exalted, walking with her down the street with trees casting deep shadows, and the wind making little noises in the leaves, and the sky over them so blue, and the stars all lit up like a carnival, and the moon big and silver, and himself with his arm around Coletta; and he had said: Coletta, do you get inspired by the stars? After that, things hadn't gone so well with them, and she had treated him like dirt. The next time she had a date with him, she had broken it. Finally, she had given him the air. She liked college boys in frats; she still went with them. But Coletta was a damn fine, and a damn decent girl; it was just that he had never been able to make her understand just how he felt, and what he really thought of her, and how he loved her, and how he had hoped for a future so different and full of love, different from the life he had lived when he went with her, with its parties, and wise-cracks and its flirting and things like that. He would like to settle down and marry a girl, a decent girl like Coletta. Really, he was too lousy for a decent girl like her; him, playing the races and gambling and drinking, and picking up bums from public dance halls and taking them in entrance ways and taxicabs and going to can houses. He wished that he was up in the bucks, and settling down, marrying a girl like Coletta, marrying her . . . And there he was with nothing, and now he was twenty-four, and in the morning he would go down to the office and work. He had been there four years.

Yet he didn't have such a right to kick. Wasn't he making his forty-five bucks a week; and having a pretty good time at that. He was getting on better than most of the guys from his graduating class. Yes sir! But to be really up in the bucks! That would be the nuts all right. Maybe someday!

Sa-ay, I saw Coletta the other day, Jack said, interrupting a long silence.

That bitch! said George.

Come on now. Don't goof yere grandpa. I know different. Lissen, remember the time you broke down and confessed that she was the kind of a girl a guy would like to marry, said Jack.

Yeh, but that was a long time ago.

Don't krap me. Yere still in love with ur, said Jack.

George said: No! Don't krap me, said Jack. George was finally forced into admitting that he still cared for her, and his admittance stirred rays of hope that he might still get her. Jack started to kid him, saying that she was a three-way whore and all that sort of thing; and George started kidding Jack about his girl, Ann, saying how she used to love niggers, and they kept dwelling upon the many abnormalities and perversions and indecencies of the two girls, just kidding, and having a good time like they always did, and not meaning no offence, and knowing that each was only kidding and trying to get the other's goat.

It's a swell night, said George.

Wouldn't it be the nuts to go out now and have a drive in the country, said Jack.

Yeh, said George.

I say! Isn't that a swell sky, said Jack.

Yeh, and the moon's nice, said George.

You know these guys that got bucks don't know how

lucky they are. I know that if something don't happen for me soon, I'm gonna get my old man tuh get me on the force. You know, it's not a bad racket. My old man made plenty. And then there's his friend, Pat O'Shaughnessy. Can yah tell me how a plain ordinary cop kin keep a family of six, and save enough dough tuh own a six story apartment building in South Shore? No sir! He had a beat down in the red light district, and then, he cashed in a lotta graft from bootleggers. My old man said so, said Jack.

Sure they all get it, said George.

But don't say I said so, or my old man did, becuz you know how gossip flies, said Jack.

Ain't I yere buddy? said George.

An' yessir, I'm gonna have my old man get me on the force. If he slips the right guys a few bucks, I'll get on. Maybe I kin be a secretary to some big shot. It ud be the nuts to be a secretary like that guy was in City Hall.

I didn't see it, said George.

It was the nuts of a show. A real one. This guy Herbert Rawlings or something like that who used tuh be in the movies was the mayor, and he was one smart gee. But you know in politics or on the force, a guy kin get his. They all do, said Jack.

Well if I didn't have a good jobber, I wouldn't mind gettin' on, said George.

If a guy gets on with a drag like I would, it ud be the nuts, said Jack.

George said yeh.

They sat, puffing cigarettes, watching the frail lines of smoke waver out of sight. A fellow passed with a girl. She had little on underneath, and as she walked through a moonlit patch, they could see right through her dress. Jack said that there

was a guy that had a nice mama, and that he probably wasn't taking her out to the golf course for nix. George said no, particularly since the guy had some newspapers. Jack said that she made him anxious and suggested that they go down to the Rex at Twenty-Second and Wabash. George said he didn't mind going down to 22, but when they took an inventory of their money, they didn't have enough. It was tough all right, them feeling like they did.

George thought of work in the morning. Every night it was the same. The thought of going to work the next day spoiled things. It was the same with his vacation. He was getting tired too; he said he guessed he had better blow. They walked back to Seventy-First Street, and had a chocolate malted milk in the crowded Walgreen Drug Store at Jeffery. Then, they parted. George said for Jack to watch Blood'l-Tell because he had his system. Jack said the nag was lousy, but that George should keep his eyes peeled on Mickey Gallagher in the fourth. Then he told him not to take any wooden nickels. George told Jack not to do anything he wouldn't do. George went home. He thought of Coletta, and hummed I'm Runnin' Wild, and then, You're The Kind Of A Girl That Men Forget. He told himself that it ud be the nuts if he was only up in the bucks.

A DIFFICULT MAN

by

William Carlos Williams

WEVE always had queer neighbors, it seems to me. Oh, I suppose everybody thinks that. It's probably true, too. In fact, everybody's queer more or less when you know them that way, just next door, without ever becoming intimate with them to find out the truth of the matter.

Oh yes, but it's been more than that in this case. Take that English fellow, Hallowel.

He *was* a cuckoo, wasn't he?

Yes, broke in my mother, he was one of the worst. He was always drunk. Oh, he wouldn't walk to the station. That wasn't good enough for him. He had to have a taxi. And he came home in a taxi at night. I think he couldn't walk many times. The man would help him up the steps. And he never paid them anything — I don't know how he could do it. I think he was a Public Accountant. A very smart man his mother told me.

One of those fellows, added my brother, who sits down at a table with the Board of Directors of some corporation and says: Well, gentlemen, what do you want me to show, a profit or a deficit? He could do anything with figures.

This went completely over my mother's head. She continued: His mother said he was a very bright boy in school, one of the

very brightest they had ever had in the school. In England that was. He won all the prizes and finally he won a scholarship to the University.

Then he went to the Boer War, I added, remembering some of the details of those days now so long past when as boys we had watched Mr. Hallowel at his evening arrivals home and heard the racket that prevailed afterward and continued, sometimes, long into the night.

He was a powerfully built man about thirty-five years of age and lived on the first floor of a two family house across the driveway under my own bed-room window.

The family consisted of his mother, a lean haggard individual with one of those nervous whip-like bodies which seem never to tire, never to flag even, in any task which the tormented mind sets them to do. Her nose was narrow, her hair black and often disheveled, though on occasion she could appear neatly to advantage. At such times, she talked rapidly, with that distinct English enunciation, which Americans often envy, and almost invariably of her son.

This boy, you could see at once, was the center of her universe, and the more she grew conscious of his serious defects, the more she praised him to any who would listen.

Her daughter-in-law was the drudge. She was older than the man and an American, a dry enough specimen who saw, no doubt, in this roaring lion of a husband the very apex of her dreams. To him she also was devoted to the point of total self-abnegation. It was a household of violent extremes; almost, though not quite, of frank insanities.

The wife, Eva, was up before dawn every day slaving for her lord and master who knew how to hold sway over her to a spinster's taste. One could see the lights lighted mornings, and a figure moving behind the drawn shades as she set the

table, started the fire. Often she would carry out the ashes, her lean body bending under the load of a heavy bucket while the man arose, dressed in leisurely fashion and, one could imagine, after shaving pomaded his hair, twisted his moustache into shape and, finally, breakfast done, issued from the front door to step into a waiting taxi.

It had to be so, explained the mother, he was their sole support, he had to be the gentleman. He had earned excellent money formerly, though times were bad now.

And the wife, no doubt, experienced all manner of satisfaction from her labors. She ate it up, you could see it, it shone in her staring eyes. She jerked herself about the house willingly, with incredible alacrity and without rest. She cannot have weighed more than a hundred pounds. And she, too, looked as did her mother-in-law, like the devil.

But in spite of their sacrifices, the family was always broke. This was the chief reason for our knowing them. Hallowel and my father were even fairly intimate being both Englishmen, but it cost my father plenty.

Then every once in a while there would be a great to-do next door. For weeks everything would have been quiet. Hallowel would come home drunk as always but there would be no further incident. Then suddenly one day a veritable pandemonium would break loose. Voices would sound, there would be crashes, curses, yells.

Our first impression was that he was beating up the little wife. We wanted to appeal to the police, to stop such brutality, to see that the woman was protected. But my father would not let us.

Then, next morning, after the gentleman had left for the city, there would come the little drudge as usual, her basket on her arm. She would hurry down the street, almost running

it seemed but apparently none the worse for recent occurrences.

It didn't strike us at first that we did not see the mother so often after one of these drunken hullabaloos.

Once Mr. Hallowel — one Sunday — did come over to father — to borrow money no doubt — and during the course of the conversation did refer slightly to what had taken place the night before. He made no direct excuses but said that they'd be all right, he and his little wife, if he could only get away from that mother. That was all he said. Then he touched Dad for twenty dollars and departed.

Mother, though, spoke to Mrs. Hallowell.

Yes, I told her, she said, I told her very nicely too, the best I knew how, that if they were going to talk so loud, wouldn't it be better if they pulled down the shades a little.

The advice must have come direct to the man's ears for he seldom looked at mother thereafter.

But one evening during the summer after it had become dark, I had a chance to witness what actually took place in that demented household. I heard the noise as usual and decided if possible this time to have a look. I was in my own room; the window opposite and below me was open and the shade half way up. I put out my own light, crouched down on my knees near the window and prepared to take my time to it.

At first nothing. Then there reeled into a doorway the figure of a drunken woman, so drunk she could hardly stand. It was the old lady herself. There she stood protecting herself while her son drunk also in all probability, stood before her cursing her, calling her names of the blackest sort to which she replied not at all save by reeling drunkenly.

Get out of here, he finally said, and he grabbed her by the waist and tried to lift her from the ground. Get out of here,

you damned hell cat. The rest was lost in screams and the fighting.

He tried again and again to drag her through the door but she fought wildly, clutching at chairs, at the jamb of the door itself, at the rugs, at his legs, at everything. He could not do it.

I myself felt powerless to act. What could I do? What could anybody do? I thought sooner or later it would quiet down, probably with forgivenesses, with tears, maybe. But I did not know the tempers of the combatants.

The old woman was on the floor now. Why didn't she get up and go? Why didn't she do as she was told? She was not wanted there. Perhaps had she kept out of it, the man could have made some headway in his affairs, having his devoted wife to slave for him —

I saw the old woman still lying on the floor, half curled up, her hair was loose about her face, she was too hurt, or drunk or frightened to rise. She just lay there while her son leaned over her bidding her to get up.

Finally he kicked her, he kicked her in the behind so hard with his powerful toe that he lifted her whole body off the floor. He did it again and again. Until screaming and holding her hands back to protect herself, she did get to her feet when, this time, he gripped her in such a manner that she could not claw back and, calling to his wife to open the front door, he threw his mother bodily out.

Like a cat the woman landed on her feet. Off balance she ran down the seven steps with lightning agility and away into the dark. I realized then that she was in her stocking feet; her form disappeared under the trees.

I confess I did nothing about it. Coming back from the window, I was flushed, as one might be after witnessing

a boxing match, or a football game, but the thing did not impress me as being serious. Why, I do not know. The house next door quieted down immediately and presently I went out for a walk — half expecting to find the old woman somewhere and to help her, maybe. But nothing came of this.

The next day Hallowel went off early in his taxi as usual. The wife followed on foot with her market basket and within a week the old lady could be seen in the back yard putting around a small bed of ratty flowers which grew there, as was her wont.

Nothing ever happened in the family as far as we could tell. Except, of course, that money grew scarcer. They, or I mean the little wife, borrowed desperately from every available source until even my father would lend his British brother no more. They owed all the tradesmen incredible bills, a milk bill, as we heard later, of ninety dollars. How could they do it? How did people let them get away with it?

One day I met Mrs. Hallowel in the town, before the Ice Cream Parlor. She was coming out as I was going in. She stopped me and I knew what it was.

I've been trying to borrow a dollar and a half, she said to me, and I can't get it anywhere. Will you let me have it?

No, I said, I'm very sorry but I cannot do it.

I beg you, she pleaded, to let me have it. I'll give you three dollars for it tomorrow. Three dollars tomorrow, she repeated.

I shook my head.

As she turned abruptly and left, I kicked myself for not giving it to her but I did not call after her. Somehow or other they got out of town with their furniture next day.

INITIATION

by

George Albee

TILL blushing, Robbie trudged up the stairs to the third floor of the infirmary. He didn't want to go up; he was ashamed to go up, because it was an insult to Jeanne. But it was the only thing he could do; he would go on up just to make sure the nurse didn't know what she was talking about. On the third floor he hunted the door the nurse had told him to look for. A card, with "G. U. Lab." typewritten on it, was fastened on the door in a little brass frame. He went in.

A young doctor wearing a starched white gown was sitting at a table. There was a filing-cabinet open beside him, and he was sorting a stack of pink cards. "Hello, you're a new one," he said, looking up with a friendly smile.

"Yes, sir."

"Are you sure you're in the right place? Didn't you want the room across the hall, for a blood count?"

"No, sir." Robbie held out a small wooden box packed with cotton. On the cotton a frail strip of glass flashed in the white light from the windows. "The nurse downstairs said to ask you to please look at this."

The doctor whistled. "You're in the right place, then, all right. Lord! How old are you, lad? Eighteen?"

"Seventeen."

"Seventeen. You kids start younger every year, don't you?"

Robbie did not feel like smiling. He watched the doctor carelessly flutter the slide between his thumb and forefinger as he walked to a sink at the far end of the laboratory.

"Fill out one of those cards, and sit down and make yourself comfortable. It'll take me a while to stain this." The doctor took a box of matches out of a drawer, butting the drawer shut with his hip, and lighted a Bunsen burner. "What college are you in?"

"I'm a Pre-Medical," said Robbie. "I'm going to transfer, though. I want to be an architect." While the doctor was staining the slide with a purple dye, Robbie gazed out the window. Thirty feet or so below him some fellows were shuffling along the gravelled path, on their way to nine o'clocks. Their shoes scuffed up little grey-blue clouds of flinty dust. Somehow, they looked hideous. Everything looked ugly. He got a whiff of one fellow's cigarette, and it made him feel sick. Cigarette smoke had never made him dizzy before; he smoked, himself. He must be all upset. Of course he was all upset. He wouldn't think about that. Oh, they were all crazy — it wasn't that — couldn't be that! He looked out the window. Things out of doors looked unusually bright, but flat, as if he had closed one of his eyes; everything looked as though he had never seen it before . . . The doctor was whistling, squinting into the microscope and twirling the knurled brass screws that focussed the lens. The doctor didn't care; he didn't understand how terrible such a thing would be, what it would mean; to him, it was just something that most of the fellows caught at one time or another. No one understood what it would mean in this particular case.

Robbie cleared his throat, which felt hard inside, and said, "Don't tell me it's that."

"What?" The doctor looked up, a red ring around his right eye.

"I say, don't tell me it's that." Robbie forced himself to grin. He saw his face in a mirror above the wash-bowl across from him, and it looked like a skull. It was a hideous grin. "I might lose my faith in human nature."

"You're a tough little egg, aren't you?" The doctor shook his head, and then shrugged and smiled. "You don't mean that. You mean you might lose your faith in one girl. What's one girl?"

Robbie shuddered, as the doctor bent over the microscope and began to whistle once more. He had been able to keep Jeanne out of his mind, but now he couldn't keep her out any more. What was one girl? The doctor didn't understand, or he never would have said such a thing. Now that he had started going to college, Jeanne and he couldn't be together evening after evening the way they had done when he was living at home. It was over a week since he had seen her. He had gone to her apartment then. She had stood there in the darkened room, and the shadows had flowed down like a black velvet cloak from her dear, warm little shoulders. Her arms gleamed like silver, in the dim purple glow from a street light outside the window. He loved to fall asleep with his lips just touching her bare shoulder; when he did, she always whispered, "My own baby boy." Jeanne had stood there, beside the bed, and she had looked so wonderful that he had knelt in front of her. He had reached up and taken her little hands, kneeling there and looking up into her face. "Little silver goddess," he had whispered. It fitted her, and it was a very beautiful thing to call her. She had thought it was beautiful too. She had thought it was so beautiful that she had cried.

"It's that, all right," announced the doctor briskly. He raised

his head from the microscope and asked cheerily: "You're a Pre-Medical. Want to come see what the bugs look like?"

The doctor sprang, but he was a second or so too late. He thrust his head out the window so recklessly that he cut his neck, quite badly, on one of the pieces of glass left sticking to the wooden frame. He knew immediately that he would be able to do nothing, but he ran downstairs.

Robbie lay sprawled on the grey path. There was a coloured bubble of blood and mucus at his nostrils, and gravel in his torn lips. He had managed to come down head first. One of his arms was twisted beneath his broken neck. With his arm that way he looked like a little boy asleep.

THE MAN WHO WALKED AGAINST THE SKY

by

Whit Burnett

I am a stranger to these trees, he said. He walked beneath their limbs.

Where was I when the buds unfolded? I missed the first pale tender leaves.

I have lost the feel of their names, he said. Oak. Birch. Beech. Fir. And Spruce.

Where is the Maple? And the Ash? And how long since I walked among the willows by a stream!

I am a stranger to these trees, and the sounds and the smells. He heard the pine tree sift the wind . . .

He stood with his arms outstretched and the wind was on his face and it cooled him and he walked along, taking the way that lay in the cleft of a greening glade.

He could say monologues. His mind returned. The taxes and the income. The profits and appointments. The dentist and the devil. Tickets. Opinions of progress and caretakers to be assured of. There was no thought of suicide. But the old trees

with their dead branches, and the rocks that stand against the hills, tombstones on the slopes, he said.

Hills, laid out upon the earthbed, sleeping. Brown flanks sunburned, smooth as a virgin's thighs. And the low descending lover of the night.

The air was clear and in a sun ray danced the gnats. A bird sang and there was music in the walk. There shall be music in this life. The knowing eye of a large bird following. There is a raven in each woods.

In each room, he said. And all the rooms in cities I have known. And died in. Chosen expressly. For the seeming calm and the slight feel of ease.

How many beds have I lain me down upon and wrapped me in with silent covers and shut me up from dawns. This with the red fantastic paper on the walls, and that adjoining the room of the women who quarreled.

What strange something was there then that held off sleep and sat upon my chest? Whose great eyes peered deep in mine and widened the rims of the world?

The smell of streets, of dust was there. The noise of the flutter of the wings of bugs and the honking of the pack. On wheels. There is no Exit. This is wall.

I have searched for the wind in dreams, and dawn, the fishergirl maiden, sang filling her creel with May. The dewy bright maiden, the sun's bright diamonds in the grass.

And the shade rolled up, and there was the fire escape. The devastation and the dullness. And the bricks in row, row on row. And the absence. And the lack. And the miles of stone, street, drive, steel, glass, brittle, hard, cold, dead.

My feet, he said, spring upon the needles of this path.

There were wings on sandals in those days. I remember how in Greece at Delphi on those heights the sun beat down and the sea lay open-eyed to heaven and the wind was fresh as this and the eagles in their circles yet were near and the high climbs made a Greek of me and how the belly bands grew taut and the great strength was in me tightening the scrotum to the center and the feel of life was like the bursting into song.

I am a stranger to these hills, he said. They are the lovers of my youth. This hill and that whose breast has not yet fallen from the fret of life. This knoll I rested on and looked into infinity.

Where are the tall hills that I looked up to? Are these then now outgrown?

He walked along. The way was steeper and his feet ate at the earth, reaching for the way. His back was bent.

The plateaus of the Rockies, he said. Once, in Colorado, when the sun set on our folly and the car had died of gaslessness and there was nothing on the earth but space and only clouds above blood bathed and full of dervishes.

Oh, in that lostness, with a piece of tin, and the thunder of all color pounding at the brain, and none to see! and the death of sound! and the suddenness of night!

He stood upon the skyline where no trees were. He walked along the skyline as a man who owned the view. The wind blew on his face and the chill upon his brow danced also down his spine.

I was a stranger to the trees, he said.

I was a stranger to the sky.

I have had bad dreams of walls. Of cages. Boxes. Vaults. And death.

Oh, let me be among these trees! Let me be a friend of trees! Let me have the sun as well! Let me smell the storm of winds! Let me see the clouds come up!

... He fell upon the ground and wept, wept at the trickle of his life and the loss of departed seasons.

But when the wind upon the mountain came again, bringing the flakes of snow against the fire in his face, it comforted him, and he laughed with a wild pure laugh and wriggled his toes and grasped at the earth with his outstretched hands.

THE GOLDFINCH IN THE CHICORY

by

Myra Marini

Mrs. Canningford was fond of walking. It was her chief recreation. The ladies at the boarding-house were not very active, and she never thought of trying to pitch quoits with Harold and the old gentleman. So there really wasn't much else to do, except to sit in the rocking-chair and talk. Much as she liked that, she really preferred walking, and she liked to go alone.

She had been alone for so many years, when her children were young and she had all the work to do. Talking to people was a relief, of course, after all those years of doggedly drudging through dishes and washing and darning and cleaning, but the habit she had formed of self-communion was still strong.

On a summer day she would easily do three or four miles in the afternoon, and come back to the farm with her face glowing and her hands full of weeds and foliage that she had found and wanted the others to admire. Settling herself beside one of the boarders, she would display her treasures and start to botanize.

"Let's see, stem square — oh! smell it! It's a mint."

Or she would murmur, "Leaves in whorls — sepals — mm — pshaw, I've forgotten so much!"

When the first bell rang for supper, she would gather the withered specimens in her lap, and hurry up the colonial stairs to her bare little room, to change into something clean and cool. She always pinned the collar of her dress up close against her throat, not noticing how that spoiled the set of her blouse. Then she carefully curled the locks of dark, scarcely graying hair into ringlets, which she conscientiously brushed out again into a fuzz.

But for walking she wore a sensible dark dress and heavy shoes.

One afternoon, late in summer, she chose a new direction for her walk. There was a big camp for boys down along the river, and she had always avoided it. But that morning the old gentleman had remarked that the waterfall beyond the camp was really worth seeing.

So she started off, although it was pretty hot and the road was dusty. Dust lay on the leaves and shrubs, graying their natural green. Elder berries were forming big heads that had been blossoms — but it would be some time yet before they turned purple-black and drooped on their stems. The sumach lifted crimson points, but the leaves were still green, and the gaunt stems reached awkwardly upward where the ground rose toward the woods. In the fields were long grasses and tall mulleins.

She walked quickly, for she didn't know any other way of moving. She liked the feel of the sun on her thin shoulders.

Suddenly she stopped. Close to her, not twenty feet away was a chicory plant, its blue blossoms set on its bare stems like defiant rosettes, and perched for a moment among those silky blue flowers was a bright little black and yellow finch.

"How pretty, how pretty," she said aloud.

"I must tell them about this," she thought as she went on, still seeing the charming picture in her mind, and wondering how she could describe it and make it as lovely for them as it had seemed to her.

She met two boys, or rather young men, dressed in khaki camp clothes. Between the road and the river she could see the roofs of their cabins and the brown of their canvas tents. Sometimes she heard their strong voices, and she thought of her sons. One in a university, one married, one traveling for a firm (she never had been quite clear just what firm).

Then she thought of her daughters. The oldest with two children; the youngest, a stenographer, the middle one, dead. She would have liked to spend the summer with her oldest daughter, but the children had clubbed together to give her this vacation. They were good children.

She was well past the camp now, and she began to think of going down to the river. She was looking for a path, when she noticed that the road turned away from the river, and near the curve was an old dutch stone house.

Houses were her passion — new houses "open for inspection," or old deserted houses. Either was irresistible.

She ignored the path to the falls, turning instead with the road until she stood in front of the house. Two scraggly lilacs with their dusty leaves guarded the walk. Grass was pushing the large flagstones apart, and the stalks of a peony bent across the lower step that led to a narrow front porch.

She walked around to the side. Two maples drooped their leaves silently above the loose gray shingles of the sloping roof. Window panes were broken here and there, and the stone of the house was overrun with vines, which in places were pushing out the mortar with their pernicious tendrils.

Her blue eyes snapped with excitement, as she went up onto the rickety stoop, and cautiously pushed open the door. Then she stopped in the doorway. On the table, dusty as it was, and dirty and cobwebby, was laid a plate and knife and fork and glass. The plate was dirty and two dishes stood beside it, half-filled with food.

Feeling guilty and chagrined, she hastily retreated to the road.

Now who could be living in a dirty tumble-down house like that — someone who didn't even trouble to sweep out the room or break the cobwebs across the windows! The sun had streamed through veils of cobwebs and fallen squarely on the dishes.

Surely it must be some man or boy, or a woman who was ill — a woman who felt chilly and had eaten in the sunshine, but was too ill to clear up when she was done.

Mrs. Canningford went back along the road until she found the path that would take her to the falls. But the mysterious inhabitant of the house had taken all the edge off the falls, and she had completely forgotten the goldfinch in the chicory.

She picked her way down the rocky slope by the riverside. The noise of the rapids was in her ears, but her conscience was making a louder buzz in her mind. There was someone in that house who was ill or very poor. She ought to do something about it. Or — her heart jumped a little at the thought — perhaps there was a dangerous lawbreaker hiding there, a counterfeiter, or a bootlegger, or a murderer.

She scarcely looked at the falls. It was almost suppertime, and she wanted to take one more look at the house before she went back.

This time she walked more slowly along the road, her eyes on the house. When she was opposite it, she stepped back into the bushes and stood, half-hidden. She chewed a little on nothing, just pushing her teeth together, as she peered upward with her bright blue eyes.

After a few moments a girl in a rose kimono appeared at an upper window, and stretched herself out as if on a cot, with her shoulders and one propping arm and her blond untidy head in sight.

Mrs. Canningford backed rapidly into the bushes and proceeded through the meadow for some distance, before she entered the road again.

"I wouldn't have her think I was spying on her, and her sick," she said to herself.

She continued along the road to the boarding-house, but

she was in a turmoil of indecision. Should she go back and make friends with the girl? Perhaps fix her something nice to eat? Clear away those cobwebs? Tell her about the goldfinch in the chicory?

That was pretty, that little black and gold bird among the blue flowers. This girl was pretty too, poor thing, but she needed someone to brush out her hair and make her comfortable. Only you wouldn't think she would want to appear in plain sight like that with nothing on but a kimono!

After supper the boarders sat around for a while on the porch. The three other ladies sat in the rocking-chairs, and Mrs. Canningford perched on the edge of the porch swing. The old gentleman had wandered off, and Harold sat on the top step looking bored. Mrs. Canningford wished he would go away and start pitching quoits, or dig worms for his fishing, so she could tell the ladies about her adventure. She didn't really like Harold. He was one of those sneering young men.

But he sat there with no signs of moving, so she told the story anyway.

"Don't you think I ought to go back and speak to her?" She leaned forward and questioned them with her intent blue eyes. The fattest lady rocked and pulled at her skirt to settle it across her knee.

"I don't know," she said. "Maybe she wouldn't take it kindly."

Mrs. Canningford leaned back in the swing, with all her eagerness gone. Harold got up and stretched his legs and lounged away. On his face was a broad grin. Mrs. Canningford felt utterly crushed.

Then she remembered the goldfinch.

"Oh, I must tell you. I saw the prettiest thing———"

BERTHA

by

Bruce Brown

BERTHA Tweedle, buxom, red-cheeked and about thirty years bold, owned a boarding house in Post Oak. Its motto on a wooden sign was: "Hospitality to all." Railroad men and highway laborers stayed there. Sometimes traveling men or ham actors in minstrel shows took a room for the night. They were certain that they would get good victuals, but as far as the beds were concerned there had been talk about fleas and bugs.

Bertha tried to eliminate the insects by scouring floors with lye and homemade soap and pouring coal oil on the bed springs. She never did use insect powder until Jim Fuson, one of the railroad men, woke up one morning with red bumps all over his body. He told Bertha that if she didn't get rid of the bugs he would report her to the Health Department.

Bertha was scared so she sent to Memphis for an exterminator. It took a couple of weeks for the place to become habitable again. Then she was careful about the men who asked for rooms. She would not take mule drivers, was very particular about the railroad men and insulted minstrel show men unless they looked clean.

Tweedle's Boarding House had a pretty good reputation after that. And Bertha's business was flourishing.

Old Man Hinds, Bertha's star boarder, told Bertha that she was too good-looking to stay in a small town and run a boarding house. He said the thing for her to do was to go to Memphis and get a job in a department store. Memphis was the town for Bertha, he said.

Old Man Hinds had plenty of money, but he was stingy. He had been staying at the boarding house ever since he came from some place in Illinois about ten years ago. His room was cluttered with a lot of old family pictures, books and all kinds of trash. Bertha said his room was hard to clean.

Cleaning Old Man Hind's room was the least objectionable thing about him to Bertha. He made eyes at her all the time and told her that he was going to leave all his money to her when he died. He even had a will drawn up in her name. Bertha treated him almost like a father, possibly kinder than she had treated her own.

But Old Man Hinds was nearing seventy and he was childish. He whined that Bertha didn't care anything for him, wanted her to especially cook everything that he ate, and he wet the bed sheets every night.

Early in the morning he got up and grumbled and growled that he hadn't slept a wink for thinking about Bertha. Sometimes he tried to kiss her when she wasn't looking. At other times he rushed up and hugged her so tight that he almost strangled her.

Bertha told her best friend, Ruby Glouser, that she hoped Old Man Hinds would die in a hurry; that she couldn't stand him any longer; and she wondered if his money would ever repay her for all the misery she was going through. Ruby ad-

vised her to put up with it, for she was sure that the old devil wouldn't live many days.

About the last of October a carnival came to town. At the same time ten college girls advertising a new brand of baking powder also came to town and they were followed by a crowd of youngsters taking magazine subscriptions. Every room in the Palace Hotel was rented, and Bertha got most of the overflow. But even then there were more roomers than rooms.

It was almost like the county fair. Folks didn't get very much rest night or day. In the daytime they were always being disturbed by the magazine and baking powder salesmen who knocked on their doors. Then at night the minstrel show made all kinds of racket. The ferris wheel was lighted and the town was as clear as day. Barkers yelled until after eight o'clock and kept everybody awake and the calliope on the merry-go-round could be heard for a mile away. Post Oak was certainly a wild place. A sinful place, Deacon Robbins said. He wanted to have the whole mess run out of town, but the mayor said that the show was making money for the town, and paying for the land that they used. It had all been done by a written contract, the mayor told him. The town had a code of honor.

Most all the country people came to town to spend their cotton money, see the carnival, buy school books and go to the ice cream parlor. They came in old, creaking wagons, some of the women and girls dressed in Mother Hubbards, and the men in overalls and mud-caked shoes. They certainly had a good time in the carnival season.

Old Man Hinds sat on the front porch of Tweedle's Boarding House and scowled at the carnival. He called it the implement of Satan. He said that the carnival people tried to take all the money away from the poor folks and did not give

them full value in exchange. He cursed all the salesmen who came to Bertha's door and told them that he would sick the dog on them if they didn't beat it. Old Man Hinds became sulky with Bertha, too. He growled that she was losing her mind, going to that goddamned minstrel show every night, neglecting her steady boarders and himself.

Bertha tried to console him. She said. "Now, Mister Hinds, you be a nice boy, and I'll give you somethin' sweet, maybe."

Old Man Hinds looked at her quickly. His eyes glittered, and he licked his old, rough lips. "A kiss, Berthy?" he asked.

"Maybe, if you're nice," Bertha told him. She went into the kitchen where Mamie, the hired girl, was chopping cabbage for slaw.

"They's more folks in town than I ever did see," Mamie said. "How do you reckon they'll find a place to sleep?"

"Lord, I don't know. Everthing in the house is full up. I couldn't make Old Man Hinds get outa his room, He'd whine for a week. He's bad enough as it is."

"Yes, he's been here too long," Mamie said.

"I sure do need the extry money, though," Bertha said.

After supper Bertha dressed to go to the minstrel show. She got away as soon as she could. When Old Man Hinds saw her go he began to grumble. "Now, you be nice, Mister Hinds, and remember what I said," Bertha told him.

That was the only way she could hush him. After he got tired of sitting on the porch he went to bed. He couldn't sleep for a long time. He kept muttering, "Berthy, Berthy."

It was about eleven-thirty when Bertha got home from the show. She saw a man sitting on her front porch. When she got closer to him he stood up. Then he said that he was one of the magazine salesmen and that he wanted a room for the

night. "I've looked all over town for a place to flop," he said. "I'll give you two dollars for a bed."

The salesman's face looked tired and sort of hopeful.

Bertha began to think, then she said. "Let me see. I guess I can find a room for you. It ain't very nice."

"I don't give a damn. I'm too tired to care," the salesman said.

They walked into the house and Bertha went to a bedroom door, but suddenly she turned away. Then she went up the stairs and the salesman followed her. She tip-toed to a door and knocked softly. The springs on the bed inside rattled, and a voice full of sleep said, "Come in."

Bertha opened the door and went into the dark room. But she told the salesman to stay outside.

"It's me," she said almost whispering to the man in the bed.

"Hee, hee. I knowed you'd come, Berthy." Old man Hinds giggled.

"Are you comfortable?" Bertha said very softly, gently. "Is there room for another person in the bed, Mister Hinds?"

"Of course they is, Berthy." Old Man Hinds could hardly talk for panting.

He turned over in the bed, rattling the springs again. He chuckled and his fingers pulled at the sheets nervously.

"Are you sure they's room for one more?" Bertha said.

"Yes, yes, yes." Old Man Hinds was getting more excited.

"Well, wait a minute. I'll be back in a minute." She patted the old man's cheek, and he reached out to grab her. She swiftly moved away and stood by the door. "Now, you be nice, Mister Hinds. I'll be back in a minute."

When she was outside the room in the hall she went to

the magazine salesman and said. "It's all right. You can have my room. It's at the end of the hall. The bed's ready. Good-night."

The young salesman gave Bertha a look of gratitude. She directed him to the room, and he put two one-dollar bills in her open hand. Bertha passed quickly into Old Man Hind's room, looking back only once as the young man opened the door to her room. She went to the bed, took off her clothes and crawled in with Old Man Hinds. "Now, you be nice, Mister Hinds," she said.

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